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Source: *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science / Revue canadienne d'Economie et de Science politique*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Feb., 1951), pp. 84-89

Published by: Canadian Economics Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/137879>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 11:02 UTC

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insisting on the fact that it is a general problem capable only of solution if the appropriate governmental policy is adopted, the *Report* places the ultimate responsibility on the public as the arbiter of what measures are acceptable. This conclusion and the analysis upon which it is based constitute a useful background for the study and understanding of the renewed inflationary pressures of 1951.

SOCIAL SCIENCE IN SOCIAL ACTION*

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A PROBLEM that is profound and puzzling is the place of reflection in individual action. No less a problem is the place of social-scientific inquiry in the social process. The happy time once was, perhaps, when the social scientist might properly, on the analogy of a priestcraft, conceive himself as, to a sensible degree, outside the community he purported to describe, outside the culture he depicted, beyond or above the historic process to which he referred. That time is past. In a day when it is something less than a decade from the time a study like Warner's¹ is carried out until it is reported in *Life* magazine, nothing remains of the priestcraft but the gobbledygook of the professional journals. Like the medicine-man's mask, this may once have frightened away the too-inquisitive inquirer, but, like the medicine-man's mask, it no longer intimidates even the City Editor.

What I am asking is whether we have taken due count of this new fact, whether we ought not to do so, and just how we are to do so. The old fact is the *scientific* character of scientific publication; the new fact is its *public* character. What difference does that make?

Our thought-model of ourselves as social scientists, and our activity as social science, may have provided an approximation to reality, existent or emergent, as long as our enterprise did not affect the object of our inquiry to any sensible or foreseeable degree. It is my contention that that day has passed. For many purposes, it is as little appropriate for us to represent ourselves to ourselves and one another in the old model as it would be for the management of a semi-monopolistic corporation like the Reynolds Tobacco Company or General Motors to think of itself as in the situation of pure competition. To do so is to put the prism of preconception between us and reality. Like modern management, we need a much more complicated thought-model to keep ourselves in touch with what we are doing. We need, in effect, a "feed-back" mechanism which will permit us to take count of the results of our scientific activity on the object of that activity, and to do so continuously as part of the single scientific act. We need such mechanisms to the degree

*This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Kingston, June 8, 1950.

¹Lloyd Warner, *The Social System of a Modern Community* (New Haven, 1949).

that our scientific activity causes the data to change, not merely while, but *because* we investigate and report.

Social scientists are not all, needless to say, caught in this dilemma to the same degree, nor is each caught to the same degree at all times. The anthropologist whose findings are communicated only outside the culture he studies need take very little count of it. The geographer, to the degree that his science is a physical science, is immune; regardless of what faith may do to mountains, Everest is substantially unchanged by his mapping of it. The historian, who rejects Swinburne's claim that "the past is not utterly past," is again unaffected. The economist, to the degree that he contents himself with an exercise in logic (the "pure theorist") is similarly exempt; but to the degree that he functions as social scientist rather than logician, he shares the problem of political scientist, psychologist, and sociologist.

The case of the economist is indeed peculiarly pressing. As he is fully aware, almost any statement he may make about the state of the economy—any published statement, that is—will affect that economy. We are all familiar, in economics, with the self-justifying expectation. If we neglect the historically miniscule interval between observation, report, and repercussion, we may say, without gross inaccuracy, that the data are affected by the act of description in this situation. The economist may, if he wishes, now make a fresh statement about the situation which has become altered because of his original statement; but this will, in turn, procure an alteration. Whereupon he may make a fresh statement, and so *ad infinitum*. As the tempo of communication increases, the interval over which his statements are "true" becomes indefinitely small. He tends on one side to become an historian, or, more accurately, a journalist. On the other side, his activities take the character of decisive intervention in the course of the events he purports merely to describe. The problem arises, not merely because this is true, but because his activity of description is based on the now false assumption that it, and he, are outside the process described. He is, under the new circumstances, himself a "factor" in the market—imponderable, perhaps, but ponderous without doubt.

And the economist is not alone with his problem. In a simple, clinical, face-to-face situation with psychologist and patient the problem is present in microcosm. Let us assume a reasonably clumsy psychologist and a reasonably suggestible patient. The psychologist notes that the patient is a little tense. He makes a simple statement of fact: "You're a little nervous." The patient now notes his condition, and the psychologist's notice of it, and his tension increases. The psychologist issues a fresh bulletin: "Your nervousness is increasing." The patient notes the acceleration and the notice, and the rate at which his tension increases is increased. The psychologist "describes" again: "Your nervousness is increasing more rapidly." We now have increasing acceleration. And so on until the patient collapses with anxiety, throws an ink-pot, or otherwise breaks out of the situation.

Of course, the clinician does not operate so, at least not in a "destructive" situation. (He might, credibly, note a small improvement, say "You're doing better," and so build up a formally similar but "constructive" series.) In the actual clinical situation he usually does one of two things: he either with-

holds "publication"—the patient does not see his notes or not all of them; or, he does, in fact, without thinking, what I am recommending that we do explicitly and consciously: so frame the statement of fact that its consequences on those facts are "appropriately" taken into account. "You're a little nervous" and "You're only a little bit nervous" may both be sufficiently accurate statements of the state of affairs; but one may set off a rapid increase in the "nervousness" present, while the other may act either to reduce it or to leave it substantially unaffected. The statement to be made would, in practice, be governed by the purpose at hand, even were the clinician self-limited to "true" statements.

But this is the clinical psychologist at work on "the patient," and not the psychologist as scientist who sees all, hears all, and tells all—to his public. In this role, neglecting minor differences in time-intervals, and omitting the due qualifications for as-yet-imperfect literacy and communication, his performance may well be virtually identical with that of our clumsy clinician. It certainly tends toward that model as a limit.

Similarly for political science. As long as Machiavelli's observations are restricted to Machiavelli, or even to him and Lorenzo, the political process is hardly sensibly affected, though it is affected; but when his observations enter into the "apperception-mass," the expectations and calculations of everyday politicians, down to the petty level of the reader of Dale Carnegie, then politics as a phenomenon has been radically altered by his description of the phenomena of politics. His observations become on one side a minor chapter in the history of politics (not merely in the history of political thought); and on the other they become themselves political events. His observations of politics, collapsing the centuries a little, become political acts.

Perhaps it is needless to multiply illustrations. A leisure class that has its conspicuous consumption of time broken into by the reading of Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*, becomes first self-conscious in its conspicuous consumption, and thereby altered; and later finds the satisfaction of those activities measurably altered, their meaning changed, and their modification or discontinuation imminent. Veblen tends to render Veblen's world obsolete. So also with Lasswell and his carefully established correlations between personality type and political type.

The pretence has been, and perhaps once had some validity, that the social scientist stood, conceptually at least, outside the culture, outside his society, outside history. Communication, almost by definition, puts him squarely in the culture, in society, and inside history.

II

It might be desirable to point up the problem by examining, superficially at least, a particular case, that of the probable impact on political behaviour of the work of two men who, while they have written explicitly about society, are primarily theorists about the nature of human nature. The first, not merely the father of "dynamic psychology," but very nearly the father-general of twentieth-century thought, is Sigmund Freud. The second is Erich Fromm, who, though widely labelled a "neo-Freudian," might more aptly be labelled

a "counter-Freudian." If he owes his insight to Freud's work, so did Marx owe his insight to Hegel; and, as Marx did with Hegel, he has virtually stood him on his head. It would be inappropriate and impossible to attempt in a paper of this length anything more than a very summary exposition of the subtle, complex, and elaborate theory of human nature that each sets forth. But perhaps enough may be said in a summary fashion to sharpen up the problem while doing our theorists no gross injustice.

The dominant theme of Freud,² writing in a period of relative peace, prosperity, stability, and ordered freedom, is the theme of war, imminent chaos, scarcity and limitation of resources, precarious balance, and arbitrary determinism. The dominant theme of Fromm,³ writing in a period of war, chaos, hunger, disorder, and bondage over a territory and to a depth hitherto undreamed, is the theme of harmony, untapped resources, order and freedom as necessities springing out of the very nature of man and society.

Freud, a man who outstandingly gives the impression of an agent in his times rather than a reagent thereto, sees man dominantly as the prisoner of fate, or, rather, of a variety of fates. Man appears successively as the prisoner of the reproductive process in one sense—he must be born and birth is itself traumatic—and again in several other senses: he is doomed in his ontogeny to repeat his phylogeny; he appears as a mere seminal trustee, or rather vehicle. He is not merely the prisoner of biology, but to a degree that trivializes freedom he is also the prisoner of history. Within himself he carries a racial memory, the guilt for the primal crime, a racial symbolism fixed as to form and meaning. He is, moreover, a mere link in a predetermined superego chain, in much the same way that he is a mere link in the seminal chain: his superego is the product of his parent's superegos (more particularly his father's), with or without their intent to that effect or the contrary. And his children will reincorporate his superego, despite almost anything that he may do.

In contrast, Fromm, a man who would have great justification for seeing himself as a reagent to his times rather than an agent therein, sees man dominantly as the potential master of his fate. To be happy, good, and sensible together he need but be himself. And being himself he will be alike productive, reproductive, and capable of relating himself adequately, sensibly, happily, and virtuously to others. He has little to lose but his chains; but the role, here, of faith is crucial. In an outstanding chapter in *Man for Himself*, entitled "Faith as a Character Trait" (previously published as a paper) he leaves an indelible impression of the self-justifying potential of expectation, rational expectation, in the unfolding and essential modification of human nature.

In Freud, a rationalist to the last degree in his method of analysis, man emerges as essentially the sport of irrational forces. Biology and history apart, he is the precarious ruler within himself of an id not only irrational, but so wise in the ways of rebellion, revolution, and the sowing of discord

²For the remarks on Freud, while relying directly on his works, I am chiefly indebted to a brilliant paper, not yet published, by my friend and colleague David Riesman, entitled "Authority and Liberty in the Structure of Freud's Thought."

³For the remarks on Fromm, I am relying chiefly on his two important books, *Escape from Freedom*, and *Man for Himself*.

that he never has more than temporary, partial, and local domination over it at best. Even at best, in order to secure even that limited domination, the ego, the reality principle, has to make ally of a principle no less irrational than the id: the superego.

In Fromm, in contrast, a man who touches here and there on the mystical in his methods, man emerges as the essentially rational animal: rationality is his species', his specific potentiality, and he is most rational when he is most himself. And rationality seems to mean not only the ability to reason in the sense of the utilitarians' calculus, but, further, reasonableness, a concept not very far from the scholastic notion of "right reason." The superego appears only or chiefly as the authoritarian conscience, a cause and consequence of irrational social or interpersonal relations.

One could go on. Freud, in a time of abundance, treats love as a mercantilist treated treasure: he was always concerned about the libidinal balance of trade, or, in more modern terms and more exactly, he was always worried about frozen credits. Fromm, in a time of scarcity, treats love as a theologian treats salvation: it is boundless, free, and almost to be had for the asking. In fact, it follows the principle of "To him that hath. . . ."

III

It is not pertinent at this point, at least to my purpose here, to inquire which man gives the more nearly "true" account of human nature. We might, on what evidence we have, consider both accounts of human nature plausible though partial and aspectual. What I am concerned about is the effect of such (or any) descriptions on the data under description.

In an area like this, very little more than speculation is possible. I think it is a fact that if one takes the view of human nature set forth by Freud, and then proceeds to ask what, if the view were correct, would be the appropriate form of government and the appropriate pattern of political behaviour, the answer one would have to make would come very close to the answer which in fact fascism generally, and, more particularly, national socialism did make. The police state seems to me a perfect homologue to the picture of the human personality as represented by Freud. The organization of the state is not merely a rationally necessary consequence of the assumptions as to personality organization, but is to all intents and purposes a practical point-for-point counterpart of them. Mass and id, *élite* and ego, propagandist and superego (the last two allied in uneasy domination over the evasive, sly, unredeemable, and eternally rebellious first) seem to me more than analogical. If Fromm's views should turn out to foreshadow a period of more radical liberalism, as I hope they may, what shall we say of the relation between these scientific descriptions of human nature and the political events that followed upon them?

Here, of course, we can only speculate. My impression is that such "scientific description" exerts a marked influence upon events. I am not unimpressed by the evidence in support of the view that man is largely the puppet of large forces and dark impulses. But I am also not unimpressed by the evidence growing out of the clinical situation, evidence of the power of a man's self-

picture to procure radical alteration in the organization of forces within the personality. "Give a dog a bad name and hang him" may be only folk-wisdom, but like so much folk-wisdom it marks out a field for science to explore.

I am not concerned here to demonstrate, and it could not in the present state of our science be demonstrated, that publication of Freud's descriptions of human nature served (in part) to call out in human nature precisely what he had described, and on a grand scale. Neither can I say for Fromm that his view will do the like, though I think it not unlikely. If the contrary of what I suppose were true it would be equally important.

What I am concerned about is what I believe to be a fundamental error in much social-scientific thinking, the error of "naïve realism," using the term in a very special sense. It seems to me that, as social scientists, we take insufficient account of the indeterminacy, or if that term offends the multi-potentiality, of human affairs and human situations. In imitation of the physical sciences, we have built our thought-models on the supposition that human affairs are far more determinate than they are, and that therefore we may describe them without affecting them, as our colleagues can with their atoms and their galaxies. The procedure seems to me unwarranted and dangerous.

IV

I have done nothing more than point to what seems to me a field of social science research which is virtually unexplored. I have added that, if what I suppose is true, we must needs revise our whole notion of social science and the role of the social scientist. We should be forced to accept a view of research as taking place *inside* the social act under study (as well as in some sense outside it) just as individual reflection is within, a part of, and an element in the building up of the ongoing individual act, modifying it in its progress and being modified in turn, on the analogy of the feed-back mechanism. I have used an illustration that may turn out to be inept but that appeared to me to be convincing and dramatic. This view would create difficulties, but I do not think that the problems that would arise in dealing with the more complex thought-models involved would be insuperable.

Neither do I think that, if my view should turn out to be justified in whole or in part, this would diminish the importance or dignity of social science. Individual reflection is not to be the more lightly thought of because it arises in, and flows back into action. The reflection that takes itself thus into account is relatively free; the reflection that naïvely supposes itself to be free is cripplingly bound. That paradox may hold for the social sciences too.

DOUGLAS ALEXANDER SKELTON (1906-1950)

The death of Alex Skelton by drowning at Lagos, Nigeria, in July, 1950 brought to a premature end a fruitful and distinctive career. To his many friends, Sandy or Alex Skelton, as he was known to successive generations, was a winning and powerful personality, strong in his opinions, scornfully resentful of pretension, but with a warm generosity which they remember gratefully. To his colleagues and acquaintances among the economists, he

CAN. JOUR. ECON. & POL. SCI., vol. XVII, no. 1, Feb., 1951